

MILES COVERDALE
AND
THE ENGLISH BIBLE
1488—1568

BY
HENRY GUPPY, M.A., Litt.D.
LIBRARIAN OF THE JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY

WITH FIVE FACSIMILES

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Lazarus Ministry Press

Miles Coverdale and the English Bible: 1935

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MILES COVERDALE
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THE ENGLISH BIBLE 1488-1568.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST COMPLETE BIBLE TO BE PRINTED IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY MILES COVERDALE AND FINISHED ON THE 4TH OCTOBER, 1535.

OUR English Bible in its printed form was born in exile. England, which more than any other country was to be distinguished in after years for its zeal in printing and circulating the Scriptures, was late in entering the field. She was nourishing her faith on manuscript copies of the Wyclifite versions long after the time when Bibles were printed in the vernacular of several European countries. Germany had a translation of the Bible in 1465, Italy in 1471, France in 1474, the Low Countries in 1477, Bohemia in 1488, and printed versions of the Bible or parts of it were in circulation in several other languages and dialects long before any attempt had been made to print an English Bible.

It may appear strange, but it is none the less true to say, that of many of the greatest men the world knows the least. The lives of the greatest saints of the church are little more than legends, and of many of the great master minds of the past a few pages will often contain all that can be authentically told.

The story of the birth and early life of William Tindale, to whom we owe the first printed New Testament in English, is involved in obscurity, and of the early life of Miles Coverdale, to whom we are indebted for the first entire Bible to be printed in the English language, very little also is known, and of his later years we have but scanty information.



From a Drawing in the Possession of Dr. J. G. M.

PLATE I.—MILES COVERDALE, 1488—1568.

Miles Coverdale was born in 1488, and it is assumed that his surname is derived from the district of his birth "Coverdale," in what is called Richmondshire, in the North Riding of Yorkshire, so that, like Wiclf, he was a native of Yorkshire.

From childhood, like his great contemporary, Tindale, he was devoted to learning, and at an early age was sent to Cambridge, where he studied philosophy and theology. In 1514 he was admitted to priest's orders at Norwich, and entered the monastery of the Austin Friars at Cambridge, where he fell under the influence of Robert Barnes, well known in the early records of the Reformation.

Meetings of those who inclined to Protestantism were frequently held at a house in Cambridge near St. John's, called the "White Horse," derisively known as "Germany," because of the Lutheran opinions held there. Here Coverdale met many kindred spirits from the neighbouring colleges.

He also had acquaintances among the highest in the land and was a visitor at the house of Sir Thomas More, where he made a powerful friend in the person of Thomas Cromwell, then one of the dependents of Cardinal Wolsey, and afterwards his successor in the king's favour.

Meanwhile the way had been prepared for Coverdale's great work by the publication of the Greek New Testament of Erasmus, in 1516, containing the first published Greek text and a new Latin translation in parallel columns, one of the most important events in the progress of letters. When it appeared in Cambridge it was immediately proscribed by a number of the leading scholars of the day, and one college forbade it to be brought within its walls. Yet the book they condemned was the very instrument by which God intended to promote His own designs.

One student having procured a copy of the Testament was so affected by it that it produced in him a great moral change. This was none other than the "gentle" Thomas Bilney, Fellow of Trinity Hall, the future martyr of 1531, whose preaching was followed by great and powerful results, for, among others, Hugh Latimer and Robert Barnes owed their conversion to him.

Barnes, after proceeding through the schools at Cambridge, had entered the monastery of Austin Friars in 1514. Having then gone to Louvain, where he took the degree of Doctor of Theology, he was upon his return, in 1523, made prior and master of the monastery, and became one of the great restorers of learning at Cambridge. He had already introduced the study of the classics and was reading Terence, Plautus, and Cicero, but being brought to the knowledge of the truth, through Bilney, he proceeded to read openly with his scholars the Epistles of St. Paul.

Sometime before this Latimer, who also had been enlightened through Bilney's preaching, was proclaiming the truth with great decision and effect. Whether Latimer was actually in expectation of Tindale's New Testament does not appear, but he was powerfully preparing the way for it, by frequently dwelling upon the great abuse of locking up the Scriptures in an unknown tongue.

Nicolas West, Bishop of Ely, after hearing him, was professedly impressed, but ultimately prohibited him from preaching in any of the churches belonging to the University, or within his diocese. Happily the monastery of Austin Friars was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, so the prior, Dr. Robert Barnes, boldly licensed Latimer to preach there, and as a result, the place was unable to contain the crowds that assembled to hear him. At the same time Barnes having been invited to preach in the neighbouring parish at St. Edward's Church resolved to comply.

This was on Christmas Eve, Sunday, the 24th of December, 1525. It was a memorable evening on account of its effects. Indeed, it was a crisis, for understanding now the way of truth more perfectly, and being alive to the state of things around him, and of Wolsey's extravagance, Barnes led the way in publicly and boldly exposing the gorgeous and tyrannical bearing of the lofty Cardinal, with the result that he was immediately accused of heresy.

He was apprehended and forthwith carried to London, where he was brought before Wolsey who, on reading the articles of condemnation, came to one personal to himself, for the accusers

knew how to touch Wolsey to the quick. "What Master Doctor," exclaimed the Cardinal, "had you not a sufficient scope in the Scriptures to teach the people, that my golden shoes, my pole axes, my pillars, my golden cushions, my crosses did so offend you, that you must make us *rediculum caput* before the people? We were jollily that day laughed to scorn. Verily it was a sermon fitter to be preached on the stage than in a pulpit, for at the last you said I wear a pair of red gloves, 'I should say bloody gloves,' quoth you, 'that I should not be cold in the midst of my ceremonies.'"

Whether these charges were correct does not transpire, but Barnes as yet unmoved replied, "I spake nothing but the truth out of the old doctors." In the end he delivered to the Cardinal six sheets of manuscript, to confirm and corroborate all that he had spoken. Wolsey, smiling, said, "we perceive that you mean to stand to your articles and to show your learning." "Yes," said Barnes, "that I do intend by God's grace, with your lordship's favour." Then said the Cardinal, "you must be burnt," and was about to commit him to the Tower when Edward Fox and Stephen Gardiner interceded and became sureties for his appearance before the bishops to whom Wolsey had committed him. During the whole night Barnes was engaged in preparing his defence, in which he was assisted by Coverdale and two other students, who had followed him to London, and wrote at their master's dictation.

At the trial he was treated with marked severity. After long disputation, threatening and scorn he was called upon to say whether he would abjure or burn. Barnes was in great agony of mind, but after taking counsel with Fox and Gardiner, to whom he was sent, he was persuaded to yield and to abjure. After a time he relented, was again condemned and sentenced to be burnt at the Austin Friars at Northampton, but contrived to escape to the Continent and again succeeded in eluding the stake, but only for a time, since he suffered the extreme penalty in 1540, the year in which Thomas Cromwell also was executed.

Coverdale escaped personal accusation, and about this time left the monastery in order to give himself entirely to evangelical preaching, assuming the habit of a secular priest.

Early in 1528 he was at Steeple-Bumpstead, where Richard Foxe was minister, preaching against confession and the worship of images.

John Foxe declares that Coverdale was with Tindale at Hamburg in 1529, assisting him with the translation of the Pentateuch, but there is no confirmation of this statement, and it appears certain that he could have afforded little assistance in the work of translation from the Hebrew, for two years later he confesses his incompetence for such a task. Furthermore, in the whole of Tindale's writing there is no hint of any meeting with Coverdale.

The years between 1529 and the appearance of the Bible of 1535 were eventful years. In 1529 Wolsey was dismissed from office, the great seal was given to Sir Thomas More, and Cranmer received his first public appointment. In 1533 the King married Ann Boleyn, in spite of the threats of the Pope, and shortly afterwards papal authority in England was formally annulled. In 1534 Henry assumed the title of "Supreme Head of the Church of England," and in the following year Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More paid the penalty of their lives for their denial of the King's supremacy. These rapid changes had a marked influence on the fortunes of the English Bible.

In 1531 Coverdale took the degree of Bachelor of Canon Law at Cambridge, and three years later he brought out his first book, "Ye olde God and the Newe," translated from the Latin version of H. Dulichius; which was followed by a translation of "A Paraphrase upon all the Psalms," through the Latin of Joannes Campensis. But for these facts Coverdale is lost sight of until the appearance of the first English Bible of 1535.

It was early in 1526 that the first copies of Tindale's New Testament had reached England. Henry and Wolsey had been warned of this threatened invasion of England by the Word of God, and they did everything in their power to defeat it. Fortunately, the enterprise of the merchants was more than a match for the power of the sovereign and the hostility of the bishops, and in spite of all warnings and precautions the Word of God was conveyed into England, packed in the heart of bales of cotton and other merchandise, and there widely circulated.

It was immediately proscribed and denounced as replete with dangerous heresies by Cardinal Wolsey, Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, and William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, who commenced their crusade against all books of the so-called new learning, requiring all copies to be given up, and ordering a systematic search for copies to be made. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was charged to preach at St. Paul's Cross denouncing the books as replete with error. At the conclusion of the sermon, at which Wolsey, surrounded by bishops, abbots and friars, was present, great baskets of the New Testaments were brought out and burned. Wolsey was determined to strike terror to the heart of the enemy, and so rigorous was the search for copies carried out that only two copies of the first edition have survived, one in St. Paul's Cathedral Library, the other in the Baptist College at Bristol.

Three years later the King issued a proclamation against heretical books, and amongst these Tindale's writings, including his New Testament, were expressly specified. In 1530 the condemnation of these books by an assembly of learned men, after a conference of twelve days, was succeeded by another royal proclamation "against great errors and pestilent heresies, with all the books containing the same, with the translation also of Scripture corrupted by William Tindale, as well in the Old Testament as in the New, and all other books in English containing such errors."

In a "Bill in English to be published by the prechours," which was issued in May, 1530, we read :

"Finally it appeared that having of the whole Scripture is not necessary to Christian men ; and like as the having of the Scripture in the vulgar tongue and in the common people's hands hath been by the holy Fathers of the Church in some times thought meet and convenient, so at another time it hath been thought not expedient to be communicate amongst them. Wherein, forasmuch as the King's Highness, by the advice and deliberations of his council, and the agreement of great learned men, thinketh in his conscience that the divulging of this Scripture at this time in the English tongue, to be committed to the people, should rather be to the farther confusion and destruction than

the edification of their souls. And it was thought there in that assembly, to all and singular in that congregation, that the King's Highness and the Prelates in so doing, not suffering the Scripture to be divulged and communicate to the people in the English tongue at this time, doth well. 'And I also think' (was the preacher to say) 'and judge the same ; exhorting and moving you, that in consideration his Highness did there openly say and protest that he would cause the New Testament to be by learned men faithfully and purely translated into the English tongue, to the intent he might have it in his hands ready to be given to his people, as he might see their manners and behaviour meet, apt, and convenient to receive the same.' "

In a letter written in December, 1530, by Hugh Latimer to the King, he boldly reminded Henry of his promise ; and as the faithful monitor was soon afterwards made a royal chaplain, it can hardly be doubted that the promise faithfully expressed the intention of the King.

In 1533 Cranmer was made Archbishop of Canterbury, and in December, 1534, Convocation, over which he presided, resolved to petition the King that he would " vouchsafe to decree that the Scriptures should be translated into the vulgar tongue by some honest and learned men, to be nominated by the king, and to be delivered to the people according to their learning."

As early as 1527 Coverdale was in intimate association with Cromwell and More, and in all probability it was under their patronage that he was able to prepare his translation of the Bible. In an undated letter to Cromwell, he earnestly solicits assistance in the prosecution of his sacred studies in the following words : " Now I begin to taste holy Scriptures ; now, honour be to God ! I am set to the most sweet smell of holy letters, with the godly savour of ancient and holy doctors, unto whose knowledge I cannot attain without diversity of books, as is not unknown to your most excellent wisdom. Nothing in the world I desire but books as concerning my learning : they once had I do not doubt but Almighty God shall perform that in me which he of his plentiful favour and grace hath begun."

Cromwell, who must have been well aware of the turn which opinion had taken, seems now to have urged Coverdale to

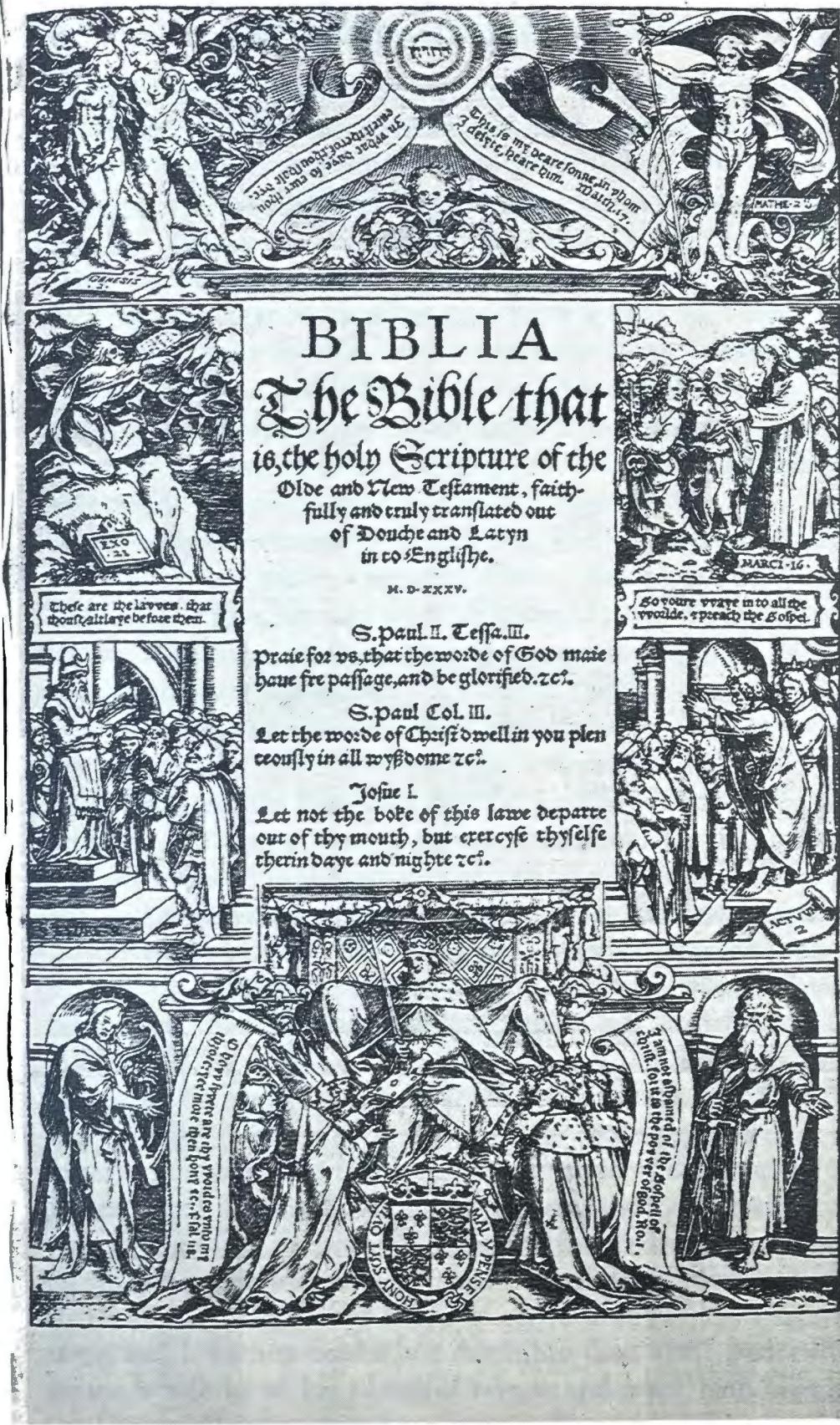


PLATE 2.—ORIGINAL [ZURICH?] TITLE-PAGE OF "COVERDALE'S BIBLE" OF 1535.

commit his work to the press. At any rate, by 1534, he was ready "as he was desired" to "set forth," in other words to publish, his translation.

The Bible was printed on the Continent by a foreign printer, in a folio volume, in a small German black-letter type, in double columns, with illustrations and a map, under the title :

"BIBLIA | The Bible that | is, the holy Scripture of the | Olde and New Testament, faith- | fully and truly translated out | of the Douche and Latyn | into Englishe. | MDXXXV. | "

The imprint states "Prynted in the yeare of our Lord 1535, and fynished the fourth daye of October."

The dedication to Henry VIII is signed "Myles Couerdale, who submits his poore translacyon unto the spirite of truth in your grace."

It is not possible to ascertain the exact relation in which the first edition of the Bible stood to the civil authority. The work was undertaken by the desire of Cromwell, but when it was issued in October, 1535, he appears to have been unable to obtain a definite license from the King ; or it may be that he thought it more prudent to await the publication of the book. So much is certain that the first edition was issued without any distinct royal sanction, but was not suppressed.

It was not until 1537, on the title-page of the quarto edition "overseen and corrected," printed by James Nicolson, of Southwark, that we find "Set forth with the kinges moost gracious licence."

The Rylands Library is fortunate enough to possess two copies of the Coverdale Bible of 1535.

There are many difficult problems connected with its bibliography, not the least of which is to determine what was the original form of the title-page.

Of what is probably the first title the only surviving copy is preserved in the collection of the Earl of Leicester, at Holkham Hall in Norfolk. A facsimile of which is bound up with one of the two Rylands copies. (Plate 2.)

This title-page is printed from founts of type similar to those used in the body of the book. On the reverse of this title is

printed "The bokes of the whole Byble," but the list continues only as far as "Malachias, Malachy the prophet," showing that the complete list needed another page to complete it. The Earl of Leicester's copy also contains a leaf not found elsewhere: the conclusion of Coverdale's "Prologue," in the same type as the body of the Bible. One of the Rylands copies contains a facsimile of this leaf.

These leaves seem to indicate that, in all probability, the original issue of the preliminary matter consisted of four leaves only, and that the Dedication to Henry VIII formed no part of the Bible as it came from the press. The four leaves would have been made up thus: 1st: title and half of the table of books; 2nd: latter part of the table of books and the beginning of the "Prologue"; 3rd: "Prologue"; 4th: on the recto the conclusion of the "Prologue," and on the verso "The first boke of Moses, called Genesis, what this boke conteyneth."

The Rylands copy also contains a facsimile reproduction of the title-page of another copy in the possession of the Marquis of Northampton, at Castle Ashby. (Plate 3.) When the two titles are compared it is quite obvious that the same wood-blocks surrounding the title have been used and arranged in the same way, but the type in this second copy bears no resemblance to that of the body of the book, and is known to have been in the possession of James Nicolson, of Southwark, and to have been used by him. In this Nicolson title the words "and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn," are omitted. In the title of the Earl of Leicester's copy the third scriptural quotation from Joshua i. 8 ends "but exercise thyself therein daye and nighte, etc." In the Nicolson title the "etc." is replaced by the conclusion of the passage: "y^t thou mayest kepe and do everythynge accordynge to it that is wrytten therein." This completion of the quotation added two lines of text and the only way of obtaining the necessary space within the limits of the woodcut border was to omit the two lines earlier in the title, "out of Douche and Latyn," the only words that could be spared.

For reasons yet to be explained it was judged better, very early in the book's history, to reprint the preliminary matter,

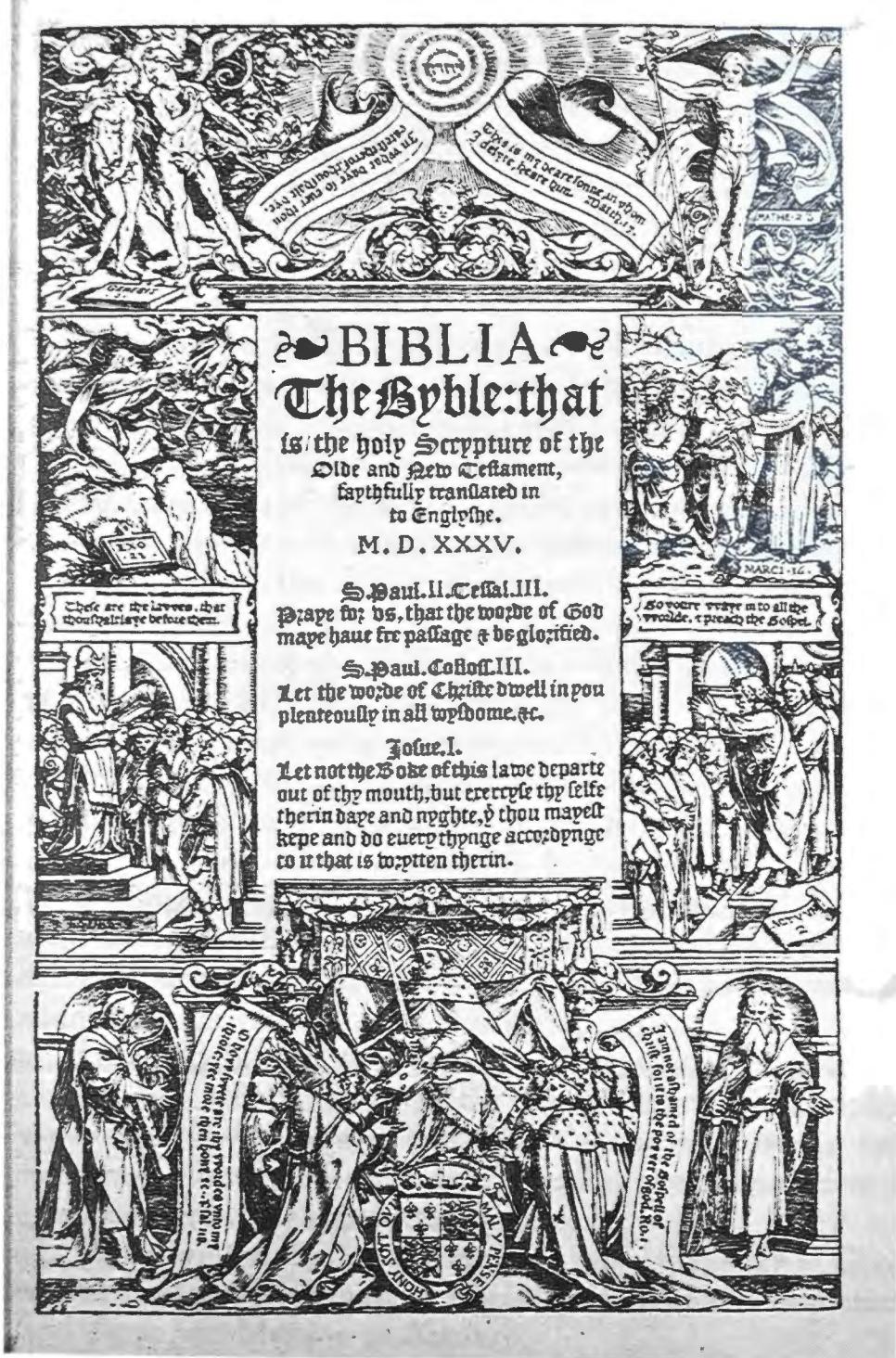


PLATE 3.—SECOND [LONDON?] TITLE-PAGE OF "COVERDALE'S BIBLE" OF 1535.

and to add to it the somewhat fulsome dedication "unto the most victorious Prynce, and oure moost gracyous Soueraigne Lorde Kynge Henry the eyght." It is possible that copies with the preliminary leaves in the same type as the rest of the book were issued only on the Continent. More probable is the suggestion that for some reason it was found that a dedication to Henry VIII would improve the chances of the book's free circulation, and so it was added.

The title-page of the Marquis of Northampton's copy is an example of what may be considered the first authorised form in which the Bible was offered to English readers.

One of the Rylands copies represents as closely as possible the *editio princeps* of the English Bible, as it first appeared.

As the library is also fortunate to possess a copy of Nicolson's 1537 reprint of the Bible, comparison with the preliminary leaves is made possible.

The first leaf of the dedication in one of the Rylands copies is a genuine 1535 issue, containing the words: "your dearest just wyfe and most vertuous Pryncesse Quene Anne" (executed on May 19, 1536). The second copy refers to "Quene Jane." By the month of February, if not earlier, the very name of Anne, far from being a passport to royal favour, was fatal to anything to which it was affixed. Cromwell had fallen in with the King's barbaric intentions, so that until another queen arose in the person of Jane Seymour the book may have remained unpresented.

The place of printing and the name of the printer have never been wholly determined, though most bibliographers agree that it was printed abroad. Various conjectures have been made, but when examined minutely they are found to be unsupported by any substantial evidence.

Three printers have been credited with the work: Christopher Froschover of Zurich; Christian Egenolph of Frankfort; and Jacob van Meteren of Antwerp.

The claim of Egenolph is based mainly upon the supposed fact that the wood-blocks in his 1534 Bible were identical with those in Coverdale. This is obviously incorrect, as a close examination of the two sets of blocks will convince any

accurate observer. That of Jacob van Meteren is not supported by later evidence.

Froschover, however, has several points in his favour. The type is very similar to some founts used by Froschover, and the general appearance of the book resembles that of others from his press, which we have carefully examined. Then, too, it is certain that he printed the 1550 edition of Coverdale's Bible. These things may prove nothing, but they are probabilities. Mr. Tedder in his article on Coverdale in the "Dictionary of National Biography" states that Dr. Ginsburg possessed two leaves of a German-Swiss Bible printed in types precisely similar to Coverdale's English version of 1535, identical in the general get-up and appearance, and the woodcuts also of the same design with minute differences in the engraving.

These leaves were extracted, according to Dr. Ginsburg, from a unique copy of the German-Swiss Bible in two volumes, printed by Froschover in 1529-30, in order to exhibit them at a lecture. Unfortunately, the Bible was stolen while on exhibition, and no other copy is known, whilst all attempts to discover the present whereabouts of the two leaves have been fruitless. The place of printing and the name of the printer are, therefore, still open questions, for it would be possible to form a sound judgment upon these questions only after a close and careful comparison of the copies.

We now turn to a consideration of the genesis of Coverdale's translation.

On the original title-page stood the phrase "faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn," which accurately describes the case.

Towards the end of the "Dedication to Henry VIII" Coverdale says: "I haue nether wrested nor altered so moch as one worde for the mayntenaūce of any maner of secte: but haue with a cleare conscience purely and faythfully translated this out of fyue sundry interpreters, hauyng onely the manyfest trueth of the scripture before myne eyes."

And near the beginning of the "Prologue" he writes: "And to helpe me herein, I haue had sondrye translacions, not onely in Latyn, but also of the Douche interpreters: whom (because

of theyr synguler gyftes & speciall diligence in the Bible) I haue ben the more glad to folowe for the moste parte."

These quotations from Coverdale himself at once fix the character of the version. He did not profess that his work was a direct translation from the original Hebrew and Greek texts ; he describes it as a translation of translations. This was the meaning he intended the reader to gather. Hence Coverdale's work has never ranked as the true primary version of the English Bible. That proud position is held by the " Thomas Matthew Bible " of 1537, which enshrined the latest results of the scholarship of William Tindale.

Modern research, based upon the sure foundation of internal evidence, has succeeded in practically demonstrating the authorities Coverdale had in mind when he wrote " fyue sundry interpreters." They were the German-Swiss version of Zwingli and Leo Juda, in the dialect of Zurich, and printed at Zurich 1524-29 ; the Latin version of Pagninus, the first edition of which bears the date 1528 ; the German version of Luther ; the Latin Vulgate ; the Pentateuch (1529-30), and the New Testament (1525) of Tindale. As proof of the great use he made of the latter we find that the whole of the New Testament and a large part of the Old Testament give practically Tindale's text.

The very emphatic words which stand in the first paragraph of the " Prologue," where Coverdale says : " I called to my remembrance ye aduersite of them, which were not onely of rype knowlege but wolde also with all theyr hertes haue perfourmed y^t they beganne, yf they had not had impediment," can hardly refer to anybody but William Tindale, and to his work. The " impediment " was the imprisonment which the heroic translator was enduring when Coverdale's Bible issued from the press, and which ended only with his martyrdom.

Internal evidence shows how closely Coverdale followed Tindale, the most striking evidence being the Epistle of James, where he departs from Tindale's 1534 Testament in only three words, going back to Tindale's earlier 1525 rendering. The Epistle of Jude stands verbatim as in Tindale's 1534 Testament. As evidence of the influence of the Zurich Bible

Dr. Westcott adduces the Book of Malachi, where in many places Coverdale follows that authority against both the Hebrew and the Vulgate.

Although Coverdale's is but a secondary translation, a version derived from other versions, its importance in the history of the English Bible is very great. We cannot too carefully bear in mind that in three-fourths of the Old Testament this was the first printed version presented to the English reader. Throughout this large portion of the Bible Coverdale for the present stands alone. The New Testament, also, which is chiefly based on Tindale's translation, as we have already shown, has considerable literary merit, and many charming touches in the authorised version of 1611 belong to Coverdale.

Coverdale's Bible is divided into six parts. The first contains the Pentateuch ; the second the historical books from Joshua to Esther, Ezra and Nehemiah being denominated 1 and 2 Esdras ; the third Job, the

DIVISION
OF THE
BIBLE.

Psalter, the Proverbs of Salomon, "the Preacher of Salomon," and "Salomon's Balettes." In the fourth, which embraces the prophetical books, Baruch (with the Epistles of Jeremy) finds a place before Ezekiel ; but a note at the end states that the book "is not in the canon of the Hebrew," and a later notice explains that Baruch belongs to the Apocrypha but is "set among the prophets next unto Jeremy, because he was his scribe and in his time." The Book of Lamentations is thus introduced : "And it came to pass (after Israel was brought into captiuyte, and Jerusalem destroyed) that Jeremy the prophet sat wepinge, mournynge, and makinge his mone in Ierusalem ; so that with an heuy herte he sighed and sobbed sayeng. . . ."

The fifth part contains the Apocryphal Books arranged in the same order as in the authorised version, the Prayer of Manasses however, being omitted altogether. The sixth part consists of the New Testament, arranged in the same order as in Luther's and Tindale's Testaments, but placed in three groups : (1) the Gospels and the Acts ; (2) the Epistles of St. Paul ; (3) the Epistles of St. Peter and St. John, the Epistles to the Hebrews, the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude, and the Revelation. As a rule there is no division into short verses, but every chapter

is subdivided into sections indicated by letters A, B, etc., each section answering to five or six of our verses, sometimes being broken up into smaller paragraphs.

The most interesting portion of Coverdale's Old Testament is the Psalter. It is hardly too much to say that this portion is still familiar to all who read the "Book of Common Prayer," for the Prayer Book Psalter is in essence the Psalter of the Coverdale Bible of 1535, and has obtained an abiding place in the literature of the English-speaking peoples, affecting the religious life of the generations of Englishmen, to whom, since Coverdale's day, it has become familiar.

In the first Prayer Book of Edward VI, under the heading "The order how the Psalter is appoynted to bee redde," it is stated, "where any Psalms are appointed the nombre is expressed after the greate English Bible." The Psalter is not printed at the end in the Prayer-Books of 1549 and 1552, after the modern fashion, but a psalm appears as an Introit before every collect. A careful scrutiny of these at once reveals the fact that they are taken *Verbatim et literatim* from the "Great Bible" of 1539, incorporating also the changes made in the various editions between 1539 and 1541. The Psalter as read is substantially the same as that printed in 1535, and actually the same as that printed in the "Great Bible."

As the result of a comparison of the Psalms of the 1535 Bible with the text of the Zurich German-Swiss Bible of 1524-29, it has been clearly established that the Zurich version was the genesis of the translation, and that Coverdale followed it very closely, but there is evidence that he worked also with the Vulgate of Sebastian Münster of 1534-35, and the changes he made in the 1539 "Great Bible" are due to this version, upon which he evidently relied.

Out of the seventeen verses in the Prayer Book version of Psalm xc, a very difficult Psalm, twelve stand exactly as they stood in 1535; in the six psalms, xc-xcv, the amount of difference is little more than two words in each verse. The numbering of the Latin version is retained so that Psalm ix is joined with x, Psalm cxiv with cxv; cxvi and also cxlvii are divided into two. In each case a note of explanation is supplied. The greater

freedom of the translation, the introduction of words which may make the sense clearer, the tender rhythm, for the sake of which expansion and paraphrase are not unfrequently adopted, are characteristics which with many go far to atone for the inferiority of the version in point of exactness. A multitude of passages, remarkable for beauty and tenderness, and often for strength and vigour, are common to both our versions of the Psalms, and are due to Coverdale.

For the illustrations sixty-eight separate wood-blocks were employed, but by being used twice or thrice, and in one case as often as eleven times, they are made to form no less than one hundred and eighty-eight distinct pictures. (Plate 4.) This practice is most noticeable in the Apocrypha, where, including the title, eleven blocks are made to do duty for thirty-three illustrations. A battle scene is used five times, a hand-to-hand conflict five times, and the storming of a city seven times in the eighty-three pages.

Between parts one and two is a map measuring $15\frac{5}{8}$ by $11\frac{5}{8}$ inches, printed from a wood-block. Very few copies of this map are known to exist. It is drawn so that the top is towards the south and the bottom towards the north.

THE MAP.
In one of the Rylands copies the names on it are all in Latin. The head-line running along the top is : " DESCRIPCIO TERRAE PROMISSIONIS QUAE ALIAS PALESTINA, CANAAN, VEL TERRA SANCTA NUNCUPATUR." In all other known copies this inscription is in English, and runs : " THE DESCRIPTION OF THE LONDE OF PROMES, CALLED PALESTINA, CANAAN, OR THE HOLY LONDE."

In the upper left-hand corner and in the lower right-hand corner are scrolls bearing long inscriptions in Latin and in English respectively.

The block of this map passed into Nicolson's hands, and it was reissued thirty-nine years later by Richard Jugge, in his 1574 edition of the Bishops' Bible. But the origin of the map, and especially of the Latin impression, is shrouded with the same uncertainty which surrounds so many of the bibliographical details of the book.

In June, 1536, Convocation passed an apparent slight upon

the Coverdale version, by praying the King "that he would graciously indulge unto his subjects of the laity the reading of the Bible in the English tongue, and that a new translation of it might be forthwith made for that end and purpose."

The following year (1537) Nicolson issued a quarto and a folio edition of the Coverdale version, "newly ouersene and corrected," and for the first time it was "sett forth with the kynges moost gracious licence." Although the title says "newly ouersene and corrected" there are no obvious traces of this care. The "dedication to Henry VIII" is a verbatim reprint from the first edition, except, of course, that "Quene Jane" is substituted for "Quene Anne."

The work of printing was done at Nicolson's press at Southwark, and it is possible that the folio edition was the first complete Bible printed in England.

We now find Coverdale in Paris, engaged under Cromwell's direction and patronage upon Biblical work, and in 1538 the printer Nicolson at Southwark produced two editions of a Latin and English New Testament in order that readers might be able to compare the Vulgate and English versions.

Coverdale was in hearty accord with Tindale and others in the defiance of the Romanist conservative forces, then all-powerful in the church life of England. But he was at heart a man of peace, and he was willing to go great lengths to assure the timid, and to draw over the wavering. For these good ends he prepared this edition of the New Testament, giving, side by side with the Latin Vulgate text of that day a very literal English version, which differs from his former translation.

The first of these two editions is a handsome well-printed volume, but so full of blunders that when Coverdale received it in July, 1538, while superintending the printing of the "Great Bible" at Paris, he put to press, in that city, a more accurate edition, which was finished in November. Nicolson then produced another edition, in spite of Coverdale's remonstrance, and placed upon the title-page the name of "John Hollybush." It differs from the first, but is also very incorrect.

In 1537 John Rogers brought out a Bible under the assumed name of "Thomas Matthew," which was based upon

Tindale and Coverdale. This was also printed abroad, probably at Antwerp by Matthew Crum.

As long as Cromwell lived, Coverdale seems to have retained a close connection with his patron, who had charged him with the duty of preparing another Bible, differing in some important respects from the two already in circulation: his own of 1535, and that bearing the name of Thomas Matthew. Neither the 1535 nor the 1537 Bible was felt to be satisfactory. The latter gave offence because of the polemical character of many of the notes, and also because of its close connection with the work of Tindale, and so with the assistance of Cromwell, Coverdale undertook to revise the text of the Bible and see it through the press. The title-page of the new Bible says that it is "truly translated after the veryte of the Hebrue and Greke textes, by y^e dylygent studye of dyuerse excellent learned men, expert in the forsayde tonges." These words do not mean, as they might, that the version was a new translation, executed by a body of competent scholars collected for the purpose, but that Coverdale had availed himself of the great influential authorities, some of which were not available for the 1535 Bible. It is probable that in revising the text for the "Great Bible" Coverdale used a copy of the "Matthew Bible" of 1537, and annotated that, just as the revisers of the 1611 version are said to have annotated a copy of the "Bishops' Bible."

THE "GREAT
BIBLE."

The excellence of Parisian paper and typography is said to have been the cause for the selection of this city for the work, or it may be that in 1538 there was no press in England competent to execute so great a task, and so the services of Francis Regnault, the famous Paris printer, were secured. There was nothing stealthy or secret in the procedure adopted. Cromwell was the patron of this special undertaking, and through his influence a license was obtained from the King of France, Francis I, by which Coverdale and Richard Grafton, the London printer, were authorised, in consideration of the liberty which they had received from their own sovereign, to print and transmit to England the Latin or the English Bible on condition that there were no private or unlawful opinions

in the new work, and that all dues, and other obligations, were properly discharged. Under this protection Coverdale and Grafton, about May, 1538, entered into an arrangement with Regnault to fulfil their commission.

For seven or eight months Coverdale and his associates seem to have been left unmolested to proceed with their work. Writing on the 23rd June, 1538, Coverdale and Grafton inform Cromwell that they are sending two copies of what was afterwards known as the "Great Bible" of 1539, and state that they "folowe not only a standyng text of the Hebrue, with the interpretation of the Chaldee and the Greke, but we set, also in a pryuate table the dyversitie of redinges of all textes, with such annotacions in another table, as shall douteless delucidate and cleare the same."

In December, however, there came a mandate from the Inquisition forbidding the work. Fortunately a portion was already safe in England. Many sheets were seized, yet, even these were in large measure afterwards recovered, "four great dry vats full" being repurchased from a haberdasher, to whom they had been sold. The interruption caused a slight delay, and the result was hurried and imperfect. The Englishmen fled from Paris, and Regnault was arrested.

But Cromwell was not the man to be foiled in his purpose. Being unable to secure the accomplishment of the work in France, he brought over types, presses and men to England, and in April, 1539, the volume was completed by Richard Grafton and his associate, Edward Whitchurch, "cum privilegio ad imprimendum solum," and this "Bible of the largest size," as it was then spoken of, or the first edition of the "Great Bible," was issued from the press.

The publication of the "Great Bible," and the injunction for its free exhibition in the parish churches marked a memorable epoch. The King, in a declaration appointed to be read by all curates upon the publishing of the Bible in English, justly dwells upon the gravity of the measure.

This was no doubt the "complete English text of the Scriptures" provided for public use, which by an injunction framed beforehand (in September, 1538) Cromwell, as the King's

vice-gerent required should be “set vp in sum convenient place wythin the said church that ye have cure of, where as your parishioners may moste cōmodiously resorte to the same and reade it.” It has been suggested that “Matthew’s Bible” was the one intended, but there can be little doubt that it was the “hole byble of the largyest volume” that was ordered to be set up.

Bishop Bonner set up six Bibles in certain convenient places of St. Paul’s church after the King’s proclamation of May, 1540, with admonition to readers to bring with them “discretion, honest intent, charity, reverence, and quiet behaviour.” That there should be no such number meet together as to make a multitude.

The “Great Bible” is often called “Cranmer’s Bible,” but without any reason. Cranmer’s direct connection with the book begins with the second edition, which made its appearance in April, 1540, with Cranmer’s prologue, which henceforth was attached to all editions of the “Great Bible,” of which six editions appeared in 1540 and 1541, each having peculiarities which distinguish it from the rest.

A copy of the edition of April, 1540, on vellum and illuminated, now in the library of St. John’s College, Cambridge, was designed for Cromwell. Another copy also on vellum, was presented to the King by Anthony Marler, a member of the Haberdasher’s Company who was responsible for the expense of printing the second edition. This latter copy is preserved in the British Museum.

On the 14th November, 1539, Henry bestowed on Cromwell, for five years, the exclusive right to grant a license for the printing of the Bible in the English tongue. A letter from Cranmer to Cromwell is extant, bearing the same date, in which the Archbishop conveys the undertaking of the printers to sell the Bible at a price not exceeding ten shillings, on condition of receiving a monopoly of the publication. In this letter Cranmer asks “the king’s pleasure concerning the Preface of the Bible,” which had been sent to Cromwell to “oversee.” This Bible had been committed by Henry to Gardiner and others among the bishops for their judgment. “After they had kept it long

in their hands, and the King was divers times sued unto for the publication thereof, at last being called for by the King himself, they re-delivered the book; and being demanded by the King what was their judgment of the translation, they answered that there were many faults therein. ‘Well,’ said the King, ‘but are there any heresies maintained thereby?’ They answered there were no heresies that they could find maintained thereby. ‘If there be no heresies,’ said the King, ‘then, in God’s name, let it go abroad among our people.’ According to this judgment of the King and the bishops, M. Coverdale defended the translation, confessing that he did now himself espy some faults, which if he might review it once over again, as he had done twice before, he doubted not but to amend it, but for any heresy he was sure there was none maintained by his translation.”

In April, 1540, the revised Bible was issued with Cranmer’s preface.

Coverdale had intended to prepare as a companion to the “Great Bible,” another volume dealing with many points of difficulty and interest, and with this end in view he introduced many pointing hands and other marks into the Bible. These had to be explained, and he does this in a prologue. The volume referred to in this prologue never saw the light, or, if it did, no copy is known to have survived. What is more probable is that with the fall of Cromwell in July, all hope of publishing the companion was given up, and in the subsequent editions the pointing hands and other marks were removed.

The title-page of the “Great Bible” is worthy of notice. It is said to have been designed by Hans Holbein. It served to answer the purpose of Cromwell, at the moment, in his gross flattery of the reigning monarch. Cranmer, Cromwell, and the King himself, at full length are here distinguished by their respective shields or coats of arms. At the top in the centre the Almighty is represented in the clouds looking down upon Henry VIII, who, seated upon his throne, fills the centre of the upper third of the engraving, and is handing large Bibles, inscribed **VERBUM DEI**, with his right hand to Cranmer, representing the Church, and with his left hand to Cromwell

representing the laity, both of them bareheaded. Below on the right hand Cromwell appears again delivering the Word of God to the laity, and on the other side is Cranmer placing the sacred volume in the hands of one of his clergy. Below stands a preacher enforcing the duty of prayer and thanksgiving on behalf of kings, and a crowd of men, women, and children fills the whole foot of the plate in a state of jubilation crying VIVAT REX, depicting the joy of all classes at the dissemination of the Bible in English.

After Cromwell's execution in July, 1540, the same engraving was employed in all subsequent editions of the Bible, but Cromwell's arms were cut out from the title-page, and the shield left blank.

The engraving deserves very careful study in detail as offering a contemporary delineation of costume, and of classes of people in Tudor times. (Plate 5.)

In November, 1540, the fourth edition was ready for issue, though it was not published until 1541. It appeared under strange auspices, as the title shows : "The Byble in Englyshe in the largest and greatest Volume, auctorised and apoynted by the commaundemente of oure moost redoubted prince and soueraygne Lorde, Kynge Henry the VIII, supreme head of this his church and realme of Englande : to be frequented and vsed in every churche w'in this his sayd realme accordynge to the tenoure of hys former Iniunctions geven in that behalfe. Oversene and perused at the commaundement of the kinges hyghnes, by the ryghte reuerend fathers in God, Cuthbert [Tunstall], bysshop of Duresme, and Nicholas [Heāth], bisshop of Rochester." Printed by Richard Grafton [in other copies by Edward Whitchurch]. Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum, 1541.

Lest the work in which Cromwell had taken so deep an interest should suffer after his fall, other names, representing widely different tendencies and sympathies must give it warrant and authority, in place of the name of Archbishop Cranmer. In two later editions, issued in May and December of the same year, Cranmer's name reappears on the title-page.

We are not told how large were the impressions of later

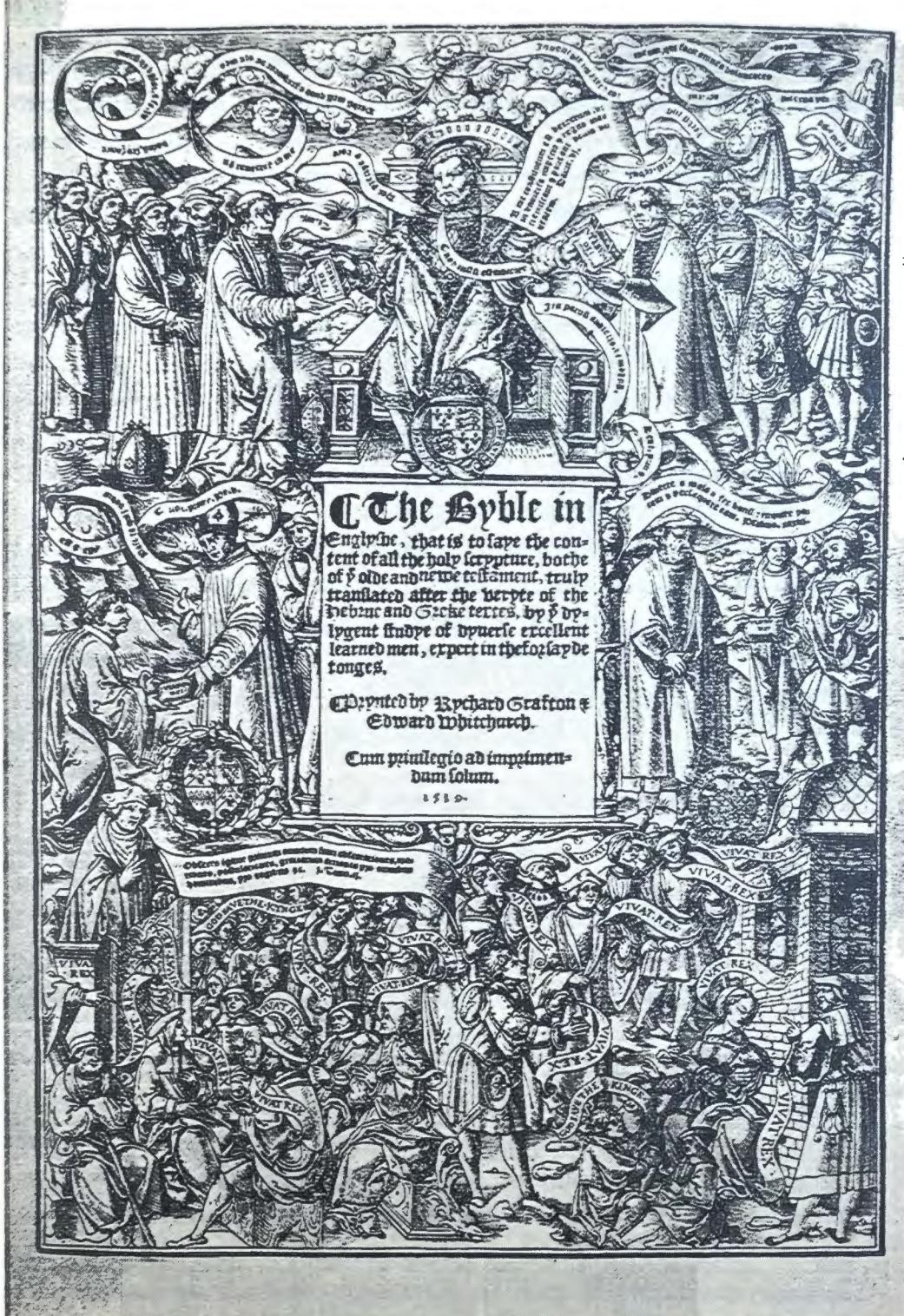


PLATE 5.—TITLE-PAGE OF THE "GREAT BIBLE" OF 1539.

editions, but as the first edition consisted of 2500 copies, we may reasonably conclude that the number circulated during these years was large.

Only by an output on this scale could it be possible for every parish church to supply itself with a copy, as Cromwell had directed in the Injunctions, which as Vicar-General he issued in September, 1538, and as the King commanded afresh in a proclamation of May the 6th, 1541—the limit of date being then fixed at the feast of All Saints (November 1st), under penalty of a fine of forty shillings for each month's delay.

This liberty was not of long duration, for after Cromwell's disgrace the opposite party attempted to avail themselves of Coverdale's scheme of annotations on difficult texts, for the purpose of checking altogether the printing of the Bible. Grafton the printer was committed to the Fleet, and bound under a heavy penalty not to print or sell any Bibles until the King and clergy should agree on a translation.

The plan for a new translation soon fell to the ground, for it was evident that the bishops had no real wish for a vernacular translation.

The King now directed that the universities should be entrusted with the work, but the design was frustrated by adverse influences.

About this time Anthony Marler, a haberdasher of London, who had borne the expense of the earlier editions of the "Great Bible," received from Henry a patent conveying to him the exclusive right of printing the English Bible during four years. In 1543, however, the reading of the Scriptures was by Act of Parliament placed under severe restrictions. Tindale's translations, and three years later, Coverdale's Testament, was placed under the same ban, and permission to read was only accorded to certain classes. These restrictions were enforced by heavy penalties. It was a reaction against the growing love of the Scriptures, which the opponents of the Reformation spared no pains to crush, but it was suddenly stayed by the death of the King in January, 1547.

On the execution in 1540 of his patron, Thomas Cromwell, who some months earlier had been created Earl of Essex, and

also of his friend and tutor, Robert Barnes, Coverdale found it expedient to leave England.

Shortly afterwards he married Elizabeth Mucheson, sister-in-law of Dr. Joannes Macchabaeus MacAlpinus, who had assisted in the translation of the first Danish Bible.

This practical protest against the doctrine of the celibacy of the priesthood identified Coverdale with the reforming party. He lived for a time at Tübingen, where he obtained the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Later he became a Lutheran pastor and schoolmaster at Bergzabern, in Zweibrücken, Bavaria, where he lived in poor circumstances between 1543 and 1547, and "where by translating in his leisure hours . . . various religious works into our language . . . he is of very great service in promoting the Scriptural benefit of those persons in the lower ranks of life, who are anxious for the truth."

During Coverdale's exile he took the name of Michael Anglus.

In the proclamation of the 8th of July, 1546, Coverdale's Bibles and other works appeared among those books forbidden to be imported, bought, sold, or kept.

As soon as Henry had "ceased from troubling," in January, 1547, the zeal for the art of printing burst forth afresh. Of the forty-five printers who had started to print in London, during the thirty-eight years of Henry's reign, fourteen survived when Edward came to the throne, and within twelve months of his accession eight new men had started in business as printers, and in the brief space of the succeeding six years the number of printers had risen to fifty-seven. What is interesting to remark is that of these fifty-seven printers not fewer than thirty-one, and those the most reputable, were engaged either in printing or publishing the sacred Scriptures.

Before the end of 1547 an Act was passed by both Houses of Parliament, for the restoration of the Communion Cup to the laity. This change rendered necessary a slight addition to that part of the service which regulated the communion of the laity, and the opportunity was taken of preparing a short English office both of preparation and communion. An English "Order of Communion" was issued under royal authority

on the 8th of March, 1548. In January, 1549, the first Act of Uniformity was passed, and appended to it was the first English "Book of Common Prayer," which included the new "Order of Communion."

This "Order of Communion" reached Frankfort during the fair time, and Coverdale translated it into German and Latin. The latter was sent to Calvin with a hope that he might cause it to be printed, but this was not done.

Coverdale returned to England in March, 1548, was well received at court, through the influence of Cranmer, and was appointed chaplain to the King and almoner to Queen Catherine, whose funeral sermon he preached in September of that year.

In 1549 Whitchurch printed the second volume of the Paraphrase of Erasmus, with a dedication by Coverdale, who assisted in the translation.

He was one of thirty-one persons to whom was issued in January, 1550, a commission to proceed against anabaptists as well as those who did not administer the sacraments according to the "Book of Common Prayer."

In 1550 there appeared a translation of Otto Wermueller's "Spyrytuall and moost precious Pearle," with a commendatory preface by the Protector Somerset, who alluded to the consolation he received from the book but did not mention the author or the translator. These are specially mentioned, however, by H. Singleton, who reprinted the "Pearle," with the following prefatory note: "I have thought it good to set it forth once againe, according to the true copy of that translation that I received at the hands of M. Doctour Milo Coverdale, at whose hand I received also the copies of three other works of Otto Wermullerus . . . 'The Precious Pearle,' which the author calleth of 'Affliction,' another of 'Death,' the third of 'Justification,' and the fourth of 'The Hope of the Faithful,' these I have imprinted." Of these the original editions seem to have been printed abroad.

On July the 20th, 1550, Coverdale received a gift of forty pounds from the King, and on the 24th of November he preached Sir James Welford's funeral sermon at Little Bartholomew's in London.

When Lord Russell was sent down against the western rebels, in 1551, Coverdale accompanied him to assist the secular arm with his preaching, and he subsequently delivered a thanksgiving sermon after the victory. His behaviour in Devonshire gave great satisfaction.

On the 7th of March, 1551, he preached at Westminster Abbey on the occasion of the funeral of Lord Wentworth, and went with Peter Martyr and others, on the 19th of May, of the same year, to visit Magdalen College, Oxford.

He acted as coadjutor to John Voysey, Bishop of Exeter, who resigned his see in 1551, and Coverdale was appointed to the bishopric by the King's letters patent, on the 14th of August of the same year. He was consecrated at Croydon on the 30th of the month and was enthroned on the 11th of September. Cranmer specially interested himself in this appointment. He was one of the eight bishops and twenty-four other persons, who were appointed in the same year, to reform the ecclesiastical laws.

John Vowell, the historian, tells us that Coverdale "most worthilie did performe the office committed unto him, he preached continuallie upon euerie holie daie, and did read most commonlie twise in the weeke, in some church or other within this citie." He was hospitable, liberal, sober, chaste, and modest. "His wife was a most sober, chaste, and godlie matron."

On his accession to the episcopal bench he was very constant in his attendance at the House of Lords, during the Parliaments of 1552 and 1553.

The young King Edward VI died of consumption on the 6th of July, 1553, when barely sixteen years of age, and on the 28th of September following, Coverdale was deprived of his see, and John Voysey was reinstated as Bishop of Exeter.

Coverdale was required to find sureties, and when the protestant prisoners drew up a declaration about a proposed disputation between them and certain Roman Catholic champions, he signed in order to signify his consent and agreement.

At the instance of Dr. J. Macchabaeus Mac Alpinus, Coverdale's brother-in-law, Christian III, King of Denmark, wrote a letter to Queen Mary, dated the 25th of April, 1554, on

Coverdale's behalf. In her reply the Queen stated that he was only charged with a debt due to the Treasury ; but a second appeal from King Christian (24th Sept.) brought permission to him to leave England for " Denmark, with two of his servants, his bagges and baggage without any theire unlawful lette or serche." One of the two servants is supposed to have been his wife. He was cordially received by his brother-in-law, and the King offered him a benefice, which, however, was not accepted.

He then went to Wesel in Westphalia, where there were many English refugees, and for some time he preached there, until he was sent for by the Duke of Zweibrücken, to undertake the pastoral charge of Bergzabern once more.

It has been stated that he assisted in the preparation of the Genevan version of the Bible. It is true that he was in Geneva in December, 1558, when he signed a letter to those of Frankfort in congratulation at the accession of Queen Elizabeth, praying that all private dissensions should be set aside, but Coverdale had returned to England before the first edition of the Genevan Bible made its appearance in 1560, as he preached at Paul's Cross on the 12th of November, 1559, and again on the 28th of April following, before the Lord Mayor, the Aldermen, and a large congregation.

In spite of his deprivation in the previous reign Coverdale assisted, with other bishops, at the famous consecration of Archbishop Parker, on the 17th of December, 1559. It is possible that it was owing to his scruples about vestments that he did not again take the bishopric of Exeter, on the deprivation of Turberville in 1559.

In 1563 Coverdale obtained the degree of Doctor of Divinity, from the University of Cambridge, and in the same year he recovered from an attack of plague.

On the 3rd of March he was collated to the living of St. Magnus, close to London Bridge, by Grindal, who petitioned the Queen to release him from the payment of first-fruits, which came to more than £60, a request which was ultimately granted.

Grindal, who had a very high opinion of Coverdale's piety and learning, offered him other preferments, and endeavoured

to obtain his appointment as bishop of Llandaff, but his objections to vestments and other failings in uniformity stood in the way.

On the 10th of April, 1564, he was given power by the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge to admit Grindal as Doctor of Divinity, and in the same year he published his last book : " Letters of Saints and Martyrs."

In 1566 the Government determined to enforce a stricter observance of the liturgy, and Coverdale resigned his living. Many of those who attended the churches of other deprived London ministers " ran after Father Coverdale who took that occasion to preach the more constantly, but yet with much fear, so that he would not be known where he preached, though many came to his house to ask where he would preach next Lord's day." He preached on eleven occasions, between the 1st of November, 1567 and the 18th of January following, at the Church of the Holy Trinity in the Minories.

There is considerable difference of opinion among his biographers as to the date of Coverdale's death, but the register of burials of St. Bartholomew's places the burial on the 19th of February, 1568, and Thomas Fuller in copying his epitaph, gives the date " 1568, Jan. 20 " as part of it.

He was eighty-one years of age when he died. He was a celebrated preacher, admired and followed by all the puritans, but the Act of Uniformity brought down his reverend hairs with sorrow to the grave.

He was buried at St. Bartholomew's behind the Exchange, and was attended to his grave by vast crowds of people.

His epitaph

" Hic tandem requiemque ferens, finemque laborum,
 Ossa Coverdalis mortua tumbus habet.
 Exonie qui Praesul erat dignissimus olim,
 Insignis vita vir probitate suæ.
 Octoginta annos grandævus vixit & unum,
 Indignum passus sæpius exilium.
 Sic derum variis jactatum casibus, ista
 Excepit gremio terra benigna suo.
 Obiit 1568. Jan. 20." ¹

¹ Fuller, T., *Church History*, 1655, ix, 65.

was copied by Fuller from the brass inscription on his marble tombstone under the communion table in the chancel, which was destroyed in the Great Fire of London. The church was pulled down in 1840 to make way for the New Exchange, but what were thought to be his remains were carefully reburied on the 4th of October, 1840, in a vault in the south aisle of the Church of St. Magnus, where the parishioners in 1837 had erected a monument to his memory.

A portrait of Coverdale, engraved by T. Trotter from a drawing at one time in the possession of Dr. Gifford, is contained in Middleton's "Biographia Evangelica," and has been redrawn and re-engraved on several occasions. This we reproduce as our frontispiece, although its authenticity is said to be doubtful.

The name of Coverdale will always be honoured as the man who first made a complete translation of the Bible into English. He was not a figure of marked historical interest. He was somewhat weak and timorous, and all through life he leaned on more powerful natures. Barnes, Cromwell, Cranmer, and Grindal were successively his patrons. In the hour of trouble he was content to remain in obscurity, and left the crown of martyrdom to be earned by men of tougher fibre. But he was pious, conscientious, laborious, generous, and a thoroughly honest and good man. He did little original literary work. As a translator he was faithful and harmonious. He was well read in theology, and became more inclined to puritan ideas as his life wore on. All accounts agree as to his remarkable popularity as a preacher. He was a leading figure during the progress of the reformed opinions, and had a considerable share in the introduction of German spiritual culture to English readers in the second quarter of the sixteenth century.

On the occasion of the tercentenary of the publication of the first complete English Bible on the 4th of October, 1835, many sermons and addresses were delivered and medals in honour of Coverdale were struck.

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